

**Town of Rockport Planning Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 24th, 2019 – 5:30 p.m.**

Geoffrey C. Parker Meeting Room
Rockport Opera House
Meeting Televised on Channel 22

Board Members Present: Chair Sternowski, XXX

Board Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Bill Najpauer, Planning director, Bruce

Chair Sternowski called the meeting to order at XXX and read the mission of the Planning Board before continuing on to the four Pre- Applications in front of the Board.

Item #1 Continued consideration of a pre- application submitted by Jonas & Stacey Contakos for the property currently under a purchase and sale agreement at 229 Commercial Street, Map 27 Lots 179 & 181 (907 district) to renovate and expand the current Yachting Solutions property into an education-based child and adult movement center.

(Applicant has additional questions pertaining to the proposed new addition) - The Applicant was represented by Jonas Cantakos- owner of North Atlantic Gymnastics. Jonas has been working closely with Rockport's own Town Planner and Code Enforcement Officer to create the plans illustrating the proposed expansion of the current Yachting Solutions property into an educational- based athletic center for adults and children. The applicant presented three slides relevant to the project:

The following Slides were prepared and presented by the applicant

Slide #1 focused on the district standards for 907 M including the objective and mission of that particular zone as outlined in Rockport's LUO, standards for granting foot print exemptions according to proposed usage, and an overview of Rockport's requirement to construct a "Connector" to bridge two buildings together.

Slide #2 was a more comprehensive look at what is required of the Connector Ordinance. The applicants illustrated their proposed Connector and its change in roof form, facade, and the max footprint of the connecting structure.

Slide #3 stated the needs of the applicant including the safety reasoning of the required wide-open interior spaces and how to further achieve this while working with the Connector requirements.

Ultimately it needs to be determined that the project not only meets the letter of the ordinance, but the spirit of the ordinance while still meeting the applicants needs as well. The Board further clarified that the intent of the Connector Ordinance was to prevent large footprints happening that give the “big box” aesthetics that Rockport is trying to prevent.

The Board raised questions regarding the measurements of the Applicant’s proposed connection structure as it doesn’t fit the look and function of a typical connector. The applicant was advised that the Board was concerned with the aesthetics of this project and did not want the finished site to look like “multiple warehouses” in a non-industrial district.

The applicant stated that if the Board would find the proposal to fit under the definition of “School” then he could be exempt from the Connector Ordinance. The district standards state a difference between “Public” and “Private” schools and athletic centers vs private facilities and the square footage exemption only applies to those that are public. The Board agreed that the applicant should come back to the board for a second Pre-App review to further clarify plans surrounding the proposed construction of the Connector.

MOTION: John Viehman moved to schedule a special meeting to further review the application submitted by Jonas & Stacey Contakos for the property currently under a purchase and sale agreement at 229 Commercial Street, to further review the proposal’s Connector requirements. Clark Doran seconded.

CARRIED 7-0-0

Item #2 Consideration of a pre- application submitted by Gartley & Dorsky for the property owned by 20 Central Street LLC located at 20 Central Street, Map 029 Lot 293 (913 district) to construct a new 35room hotel. The Applicant was represented by Tyler, Stewart, and Mary Ann Smith, and Professional Engineer Will Gartley.

The applicant is proposing to build a 35-room hotel on Central Street in Rockport next to the Shepard’s block. Several years ago, the Stuart Smith purchased the block of buildings along Central St., plus the house adjacent to the block. The Smith family provided an overview the various upgrades and investments into downtown Rockport over the years. They are working with a professional team including local architects, and Professional Engineer Will Gartley who has collaborated with the family on several other of their downtown projects in the past.

Stuart Smith described why the family wished to bring a hotel to the downtown area. He explained that when they first purchased the Shepard’s block, he noticed that there was no place to get a cup of coffee in Rockport. With that in mind they made the coffee shop happen. They see a need for a boutique hotel here and they would like to bring the vision into fruition much as they did with the coffee shop.

The proposal would bring about 20 full time jobs to the area, with many more being fulfilled seasonally, and the Smith’s believe that this is a business that would fit the downtown vision.

Tyler Smith explained the positioning of the proposed structure, which would be steel with an aged brick façade, that would be built parallel along Central St. with the main entrance facing Central, and a separate ADA entrance out behind the building, as well as an ADA entrance to the side of the front entrance. It will have rooms both in front of and behind the building and will have decks that will not protrude over the sidewalks.

Will Gartley, a Professional Engineer with Gartley & Dorsky, explained that the location of the project was in zoning district 913- the downtown district, according to Rockport's Land Use Ordinance, and that there are special standards for that parcel of buildings. He stated that all of those standards are met by the applicant. Power will be provided through an overhead line, although they are seeking out a more aesthetically pleasing alternative, and a sewer connection located back behind the building. Parking will be leased by the hotel from some of the spaces currently owned by Shepard's Block LLC.

The building height will be 40' from the sidewalk to the eave and 50' from the sidewalk to the peak. Full application package will provide all additional measurements of structure to be built.

No connectors needed as the building will be autonomous to the others on that block, and therefore no common walls will be erected. Section of rooftop bar can be enclosed for foul weather protection.

The Smith's went over the history of the lot, which still features an old foundation from a building that was erected in the mid 1800's. It had active store fronts and offices but fell unused by the 1960s and remained so throughout the decade until the Graffam's bought it in the 1970's and began to renovate it. They discovered that the building had serious structural issues and it collapsed before they were able to get an engineer to examine it. The lot has been empty ever since.

The Board wanted more details pertaining to the parking plan. The applicant stated that there are currently 50 spaces out back and that they were working it out how many spaces to lease from Shepard's Block. Stuart Smith stated that parking has never been an issue with their Camden locations even though Camden has a limited public parking situation especially during peak season. The Smith's work with their employees to assist them in parking offsite and utilize valet parking when needed. They will do homework on the requirements of the Hotel and the restaurant but feels that the proposal meets the current parking standards.

Most guests will enter and exit through the lobby. The parking lot out back will help encourage guests to also use the back entrance. 2 elevators will be constructed.

Viewshed impact: The applicant stated that the opposite side of the street is mostly undeveloped, and the grade increases quickly making the impact on the view shed by this proposal minimal.

There is a projected minimum impact on the sewer infrastructure and the applicants are planning to send a letter stating such to Woodward & Curran.

The road leading down to the parking lot is narrow and makes turning into traffic dangerous. The Board stated that this issue may need to be addressed in the future and the applicant agreed. The Board also stated that parking is a very sensitive conversation in the village and that it would have to be carefully planned and worked out. The ordinance states that the applicant may need to go in front of the Appeal's Board to gain an off-street parking waiver in order to utilize off street parking spaces to fulfill requirements.

The applicant is prepared to come back to the Planning Board in November with a full application.

Item #3 Consideration of a pre- application submitted by Marga & Stephen Hutchinson for the property at 6 Robinson Drive, Map 16 Lot 95 (904 district) to operate at a Family Childcare at their home.

Marga and Stephen Hutchinson explained that they have an apartment-like space in their home that they would like to turn into an at home daycare. The children would be 6-8 weeks – 5 years old with a maximum of 12 kids at any one time. Marga is working with DHS to become licensed. The daycare will follow the academic calendar and be open approx. 7:00 PM – 5:00 PM or so.

There is currently a paved road and the site was previously the location of Seacoast Security so it has a paved loop for parking. The property features a separate, undeveloped lot that can be used for additional parking or equipment if necessary. The child care portion of the house will have a separate entrance although that is not a requirement. The property features well water that has been tested.

The Board had no further questions and the applicants will prepare to come to the next meeting with a full application.

Item #4 Consideration of a pre- application submitted by Douglas Clayton for the property at 330 Commercial Street, Map 20 Lots 182 & 183 (907 district) to reuse the former Auto Dealership for other activities

Douglas Clayton was there to present his own proposal and started off by reviewing his family history of restoring properties in the Rockport area. His long term vision for the former dealership is to see some sort of senior housing built on the lot. Short term he has put his energy into refurbishing the existing buildings for commercial use. Some parts of the building were unsalvageable and demolished in accordance with the recommendation to do so by an engineer. Landscaping and exterior upgrades have been done to the remaining structure.

Two commercial tenants are already utilizing the space, and Clayton has a basement space and a garage space that will soon be available to more tenants. He stated that he has been asked by several people if they could use his lot for long term parking and that he was hoping to turn part of the lot into a formal parking business.

Chair Sternowski explained the Planning Board's role regarding permitting "Change of Use" by an applicant when they are changing one business to another. It was stated that a purchase and sales agreement was sufficient to file this application. The full application will need details on standards such as exterior lighting, landscape plans, parking, etc., and that the Board had reviewed some standards with one of his tenants, but that it was really his responsibility to take this on for his entire property prior to leasing it out.

The Board determined that the lot is located in two different zones – the 907 district and the 903 district. Paragraph 907 has a broad range of allowable commercial uses but commercial parking is not one of them. Various applications of "nonconforming" use standards were discussed and how they may apply to the final application moving forward. 907 clearly states that there shall be no storage of any kind is allowed commercially and the Board unanimously agreed. They encouraged the applicant to revisit the Board after reining in his scope and refining his application.

Item #5. Consideration of the Meeting Minutes from the July, August and September 2019 Meetings

The Board only had possession of the minutes from the August meeting. The review for all minutes was deferred until the next regular meeting in November.

Item #6. New Business (Board Training) - None

Item #7. Adjournment

MOTION: John Viehman moved to adjourn. Ted Skowronski seconded. All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at ~~XXX~~ PM.

CARRIED ~~X-X-X~~

Respectfully submitted,

Mandy Marriner Everett